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PENCE VOTES AGAINST MASSIVE FEDERAL MEDICARE ENTITLEMENT

Washington, Jun 26, 2003 - WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Mike Pence released the following statement today regarding the Medicare reform bill, which passed the U.S. House of Representatives by a vote of 216 to 215:

“Today I voted against H.R.1, the Prescription Drug and Medicare Modernization Act of 2003. I regret that instead of focusing scarce federal resources on seniors struggling with the cost of prescription drugs, Congress chose to create the biggest new federal entitlement since 1965.

“The creation of a universal drug program is fiscally irresponsible and not necessary for most seniors who already have prescription coverage.

“This entitlement will add at least \$3 trillion dollars in new Medicare unfunded liabilities when the United States government is already carrying \$20 trillion in unfunded liabilities in the form of benefits already promised to seniors in Medicare and Social Security.

“This entitlement is unnecessary for most seniors, seventy-six percent of whom already have prescription drug coverage. According to the Congressional Budget Office, under this legislation, more than a third of retired Americans who enjoy coverage from a former employer, could lose that coverage.

“The final consequence of this entitlement is that it could usher in the beginning of socialized medicine in America. This type of program, which is built on unrealistic fiscal projections and incorrect assumptions about human behavior, will invariably lead to the kinds of escalating costs for which price controls and outright government management will be inevitable.

“Congress should have helped seniors near the poverty level and passed reform, giving Americans the same choices that members of Congress have instead of creating a massive, new federal entitlement.”

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